



CHERYL HASELMORST/The Columbian

Mill stones at Esther Short Park.

Stones came around Cape

By BOB BECK
The Columbian

A reader wrote to ask about the history of the big grinding stones that stand at two entrances to Esther Short Park. He said he had heard the stones had been aboard the "Brother Jonathon," a ship that sank off the coast of California during the last century.

The two sets of burr stones, shipped from New York around Cape Horn in 1844, did indeed come here aboard the Brother Jonathon. This ship later sank during a storm north of San Francisco in about 1864, with a great loss of lives, including that of the commander of the Vancouver Barracks.

The old fashioned stones for the grinding of flour were shipped to C.J. Crate in Clark County. They were taken to the site of what was called the old Herter Mill, near the present fish hatchery a few miles east of Vancouver, in 1844. They were installed in an overshot water-powered flour mill on Love Creek, that flows through the hatchery, and ground wheat into flour there for many years.

Later the stones were brought to the old flour mill in Vancouver, in the shadow of the Witness Tree, at the foot of Main Street.



Have you wondered?

There they remained for a half-century.

The stones were donated to the city of Vancouver in 1906 and placed in the park on June 30 of that year. There they remain, although there is no plaque or legend describing their history.

The stones are about 3½ feet in diameter and 8 inches thick. They are hewn from what appears to be granite and bound with iron bands. The faces of the stones are niched to make the grinding surface. In the center of each set is a pivot to hold one atop the other while they were in motion.

By an odd coincidence, within one week after the stones were removed from the old mill in Vancouver, the building burned to the ground and the old Witness Tree fell into the Columbia River, the victim of a flood.

Questions and observations about Clark County landmarks can be sent to Bob Beck at The Columbian, P.O. Box 180, Vancouver, Wash. 98666.